

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01

CIAE-00 CIEP-01 COME-00 DODE-00 FPC-01 H-02 INR-07

INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-03 USIA-06

SAM-01 OES-03 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 FRB-03

LAB-04 SIL-01 ACDA-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SAJ-01 (ISO) W

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R 301000Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8550

INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

USNATO BRUSSELS 750

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EALR, ECON, ENRG, CZ

SUBJECT: ORENBURG GAS PIPELINE

REF: MOSCOW 5927

1. EMBASSY HAS BEEN AWARE FOR SOME TIME OF RUMORS THAT CZECHO-SLOVAKIA HAS DECIDED NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN ACTUAL CONSTRUCTION OF ORENBURG GAS PIPELINE AFTER ALL. SOURCES IN BOTH CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY AND PRESS HAVE TOLD US PRIVATELY IT NOW VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THAT CZECHOSLOVAKIA WILL NOT TAKE PART IN ACTUAL LAYING OF GAS PIPELINE BUT WILL ONLY MOUNT FIVE COMPRESSOR STATIONS FOR PIPELINE ALONG SECTOR FORMERLY ASSIGNED TO IT FOR CONSTRUCTION. (EQUIPMENT FOR COMPRESSOR STATIONS WILL, AT LEAST IN PART, BE IMPORTED FROM ABROAD, PRESUMABLY FROM WESTERN SUPPLIERS.) ONE JOURNALIST

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THOUGH RUSSIANS IN FINAL ANALYSIS DID NOT WANT LARGE NUMBER OF

WORKERS FROM ANOTHER SOCIALIST COUNTRY WHO HAD BEEN RECRUITED BY PROMISES OF LARGE BONUSES, AND WHO WOULD HAVE UNAVOIDABLY DRAWN ATTENTION TO LARGE DISCREPANCIES IN WAGES BETWEEN SOVIET AND EE (CZECHOSLOVAK) WORKERS.

2. ANOTHER RUMOR HAS IT THAT CZECHS EITHER DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH HIGHLY SPECIALIZED WORKERS TO HANDLE PROJECT, OR COULD NOT INDUCE ENOUGH VOLUNTEERS TO WRK IN USSR, DESPITE REPORTED 100,000 CZECH CROWN BONUSES OFFERED. ACCORDING TO SOURCES AND SCATTERED PRESS REPORTS, CZECHOSLOVAK CONSTRUCTION ENTERPRISES WILL DEVOTE ENERGIES INSTEAD TO CONSTRUCTION OF GAS PIPELINE FROM WESTERN END OF ORENBURG (NEAR UZHGOROD) ACROSS CZECHOSLOVAKIA TO BORDER WITH WEST GERMANY. ONE PRESS REPORT SAYS NEW LINE WILL HAVE CAPACITY OF NINE BILLION CUBIC METERS OF GAS PER ANNUM. ARTICLE FURTHER STATES THAT BY 1979 TRANSIT GAS PIPELINE SYSTEM IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA WILL CONSIST OF 2,280 KILOMETERS OF PIPE AND ELEVEN COMPRESSOR STATIONS WITH ANNUAL CAPACITY OF 37 BILLION CUBIC METERS OF GAS.

3. PRESS ACCOUNTS IN RECENT WEEKS HAVE GIVEN NO DIRECT CONFIRMATION TO RUMORS DISCUSSED ABOVE; ON CONTRARY, MOST HAVE HERALDED DESPATCH OF FIRST GROUP OF WORKERS AND TECHNICIANS TO ORENBURG SITE FOLLOWING SIGNING ON JULY 4, 1975, OF FINAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN CZECHS AND SOVIETS CONCERNING TERMS OF COOPERATION ON PROJECT. A CLOSE READING OF ARTICLES APPEARING IN PRESS, HOWEVER, EITHER REVEALS NO MENTION AT ALL OR, AT MOST, CAREFULLY HEDGED STATEMENTS ON ACTUAL PIPE-LAYING PART OF PROJECT, WITH RECENT PRONOUNCEMENTS REFERRING PRIMARILY TO COOPERATION ON COMPRESSOR STATIONS. GIVEN MUCH-TALKED-ABOUT SHORTAGE OF LABOR IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, ESPECIALLY OF HIGHLY-TRAINED SPECIALISTS OF CALIBER NEEDED FOR PROJECT OF ORENBURG'S MAGNITUDE, AND HISTORIC SOVIET ZENOPHOBIA, WE FIND RUMORS OF SHARPLY CURTAILED PLANS FOR PARTICIPATION ON PART OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN CONSTRUCTION OF PIPELINE LOGICAL AND EASY TO BELIEVE. IT MAY ALSO BE THAT SOVIETS HAVE DECIDED TO GO EASY ON CZECHOSLOVAKIA JUST NOW, AS NEGATIVE SIGNS BEGIN TO MOUNT THAT ECONOMY OF MOSCOW'S MOST SENSITIVE SATRAPY IS IN FOR SOME DIFFICULT TIMES AHEAD.

4. FOR USNATO: IN VIEW OF HIGH INTEREST IN ORENBURG PIPELINE PROJECT AMONG ALL DELEGATIONS AT ECONAD MEETING ON CZECHOSLOVAK LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ECONOMY JULY 11, EMBASSY HAS NO OBJECTION TO THIS REPORT BEING SHARED WITHIN NATO SO LONG AS SOURCES ARE NOT DIVULGED.  
PERRY

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